



Hello Nature Friends,

Fall is here, the nights are cooler and the mornings are crisp. We have been waiting through a very long and hot summer to be able to say that, so it is really a joy to welcome the change of the season.

Fall comes slowly in Southern California but if you pay close attention to the Nature around you will notice those changes; acorns are falling under the oak trees, the poison oak leaves are turning a bright red. The bird migration is over, and you might have noticed that new birds are more prevalent like Dark-eye Juncos. Even if the vegetation is very dry, Doveweeds or turkey mulleins are popping up all over in misty green little pillows and the telegraph weeds are standing tall, covered with yellow flowers.

You might be wondering about the status of the Canyon Trail that was closed more than two years ago after a major flood. PCNCA had a meeting with the County Parks representatives regarding the Canyon Trail repair project, and they presented an updated plan and schedule. The funding for the repairs has been approved and they are now working on plans, permits, and other documents required for the work to begin. The revised schedule calls for the work to be completed and the trail reopened in November of 2019. We will get monthly progress reports as the project goes forward and we will keep you up to date on the progress with future Rattler articles.

Have a great fall!



The Rattler

Sponsored by the Placerita Canyon Nature Center Associates
19152 Placerita Canyon Road, Newhall, CA 91321
www.placerita.org (661) 259-7721

Placerita Canyon Nature Center
Over 50 Years of Nature Education

October-November 2018

Editor: Evelyn Vandarsande Publisher: Heidi Webber

Dave Taylor Received the Bob Moss Award

Dave had a vision about how to use the Nature Boxes during the summer. He went right ahead and made it a reality.

Each morning the Nature Boxes were shown on the patio so all the visitors could ask questions about the contents. The docents heard about it and came each morning during this hottest summer on record, we thank them for their dedication. There were many docents every morning answering questions and having a great time together.

The visitors found out about the great activity, and came back with their children, sometimes staying 2 hours to ask lots of questions (it can be a long summer when kids are out of school!). Gone were the quiet long days of summer with all this action each morning on the patio. We were all very impressed by Dave's dedication and this is why Dave Taylor was awarded the Bob Moss Cup award by Jim Crowley (previous recipient of the Cup), at the breakfast of the Champions.

Bob Moss was a naturalist, a professional Educator and leader. This cup is presented in the tradition of Bob's memory, to recognize exceptional volunteer work at Placerita Canyon Nature Center.

Our warmest congratulations go to Dave Taylor.



Nibble Grande, Our New Kestrel

A big name for such a small but mighty bird. The name kestrel is given to several different members of the falcon genus, Falcon.

Kestrels are most easily distinguished by their typical hunting behavior which is to hover at a height of around 10–20 meters over open country and swoop down on prey, usually small mammals, lizards or large insects.

Tidbit, our previous kestrel, had just passed away when we got news about Nibble. He is one and a half years old, and came to us from

Wildlife Care of Southern California. He had been injured and had a broken wing, he had been wrapped up but the wing did not heal properly and is irreparable. He had been under the care of a vet tech in Bakersfield.

Due to the loss of Tidbit, we had room on our permit – so it was a great match! At this point, only Marietta Ewing, Recreation Services leader and Frank Hoffman, Recreation Services Supervisor are allowed to handle Nibble who had never been handled before. He eats 30 grams of fresh rat meat every day and is blossoming.

Welcome to your new home, Nibble!



Who is Alicia Tilley?

Alicia has accepted the role of handling publicity for Placerita Canyon Nature Center. Let's get to know her.

Growing up in a rural farm community in central Indiana, nature was everywhere. I grew up wandering up and down ravines that bottomed out in creek beds formed by glacial melt and eventually swamped out in marshy grass fields.

Occasionally I encountered poison ivy and it only took me 2 times experiencing the blistering rashes to be able to recognize that plant. So... I suppose you could say I accidentally learned about nature.

After graduating from Indiana University, Heron School of Art with a BFA majoring in Communications & Design, I ventured out west to California. It was an adjustment to appreciate the browns and yellows of a dry region after being saturated

with every shade of green imaginable.

Placerita Canyon was in fact one of the first areas I explored after arriving in California. That was 22 years ago. I've hiked the Canyon and Waterfall Trails many times with a baby on my back, my dogs and a great pair of hiking boots and now I am excited to share similar experiences with other children by being a docent at Placerita Canyon Nature Center.

I have also found the people at Placerita Canyon Nature Center to be most interesting. Each one has a unique perspective and passion for nature. My particular passion for birding is perhaps because it's a real-time mystery and treasure hunt - all in one. That's why I wear my binoculars like a piece of fine jewelry at Placerita Canyon!



Twilight Hikes

These hikes are always a great success in the summer. After all, this is the only chance to visit the park after sundown. It is always a little spooky, with different noises around you and a welcome coolness in the air.

In July, a huge group of 140 people came, but August was a much smaller group. Here are Denny Truger's comments: Around 70 plus hikers were split into two groups headed by Frank Hoffman, Recreation Service Supervisor and docent Dan Duncan. We saw a Barn Owl, Great-horned Owl and plenty of bats. Frank saw some amphibians in the pond, and there were plenty of scorpions on the hillside trail.

It was a very fun and enthusiastic group of hikers. Be aware that these hikes will start at 6:00pm in October and November.



Linette Brammer Gives a CPR Class

Linette has been our CPR teacher for many years, and we are very grateful for her instruction. She rents the equipment and makes sure that her class is upgraded according to the latest studies being done by the Red Cross.

The docents and the County employees are very happy to be able to get this opportunity, and it can be extremely important for dealing with the public in case of an emergency. After completing the test, the students will get a card good for 2 years. It is a class where you learn a lot and you have to pay attention, but it is not boring in the least as I heard much laughter coming from the classroom!

Thank you again Linette for being such a great teacher.

Pixie, Our New Opossum

Opossum is a marsupial endemic to the Americas. Pixie is 2 and half years old and a little bit on the small side for her age, but with a lovely disposition. She has had interaction with people since she was very little, because she has a bone disease that requires daily treatment. She is imprinted on humans, and therefore could not ever be released into the wild.

She comes to us from Stoneview Nature Center. Dave Stives, Park Animal Keeper, made the decision to bring her to Placerita because he was sure she could be handled on a regular basis. The enclosure had to be adapted before her arrival.

Now her handlers are Linda Ioerger, Jim Wyrozumski, Marietta Ewing and Frank Hoffman. Nearly every day she gets human contact, with days off on Sundays and Mondays.





Going to the Hollywood Bowl is a nice tradition and a great way to spend a summer evening.

Our Yearly Trip to the Hollywood Bowl

Each year, LA County Supervisor Kathryn Barger gives free tickets to the Nature Center Docents, to thank them for their volunteer work.

We were supposed to see “The Nutcracker” with the ballet from Cuba, but the dancers had some problems at the border and could not come into the US. Instead, we very much enjoyed the LA Philharmonic with conductor Gustavo Dudamel, and Rodrigo y Gabriela came for the second part of the concert with salsa music! That was quite a change! Some people were dancing in the aisles and everyone had a good time.



Fall Kick-off on September 24

It was time to brush up on our knowledge, because the first thing we heard is that all the school field trips are booked up for the month of October. That is even earlier than usual!

Ron Kraus, president of PCNCA, was going to do his best to prepare the docents to be ready for action. We did a review in the classroom about the different duties the docents have to assume with the students, and we went on the trail to review the names of plants and the different highlights of the trails.

It was important to do this brush up, to see all our docent friends and be aware of the different events coming up on the calendar.

Jim Crowley with his committee had prepared a feast, including wonderful ribs. They worked hard on Sunday to have the rooms decorated and ready for the event.

Thank you to all the chefs who brought dishes for the pot luck. It was delicious and nice to reconnect after the summer.



Outreaches

Placerita Canyon Nature Center participates in many local events by doing outreaches. Bill Webber often plans the day along with a faithful group of docents who can handle animals although that isn't a requirement. The promotion this provides for Placerita is invaluable, and their table is often the one where crowds gather the most. Who can resist a snake handler? If anyone is interested in joining the outreach team, feel free to contact Heidi Webber, you have her email on your roster!

Glenda Perl, Richard Brammer and Bill Webber came to the annual River Clean-up and Environmental Expo and we thank

them for their dedication. Their next stop will be at Central Park for Touch-a-Truck on October 13, then the Chili Cook-off on October 20 and at the Sheriff's Station for Halloween on October 28! They are a busy bunch!

Trail Treasures

By RuthAnne Murthy
Jimson Weed

Jimson weed, also known as Datura, is a native perennial plant of the nightshade family. It grows in dry, disturbed places such as along trails. It grows up to 3 feet tall and is covered with grayish hairs. The Spanish name is toloache. It has a strong smell that some say is similar to peanut butter. All parts of the plant are poisonous and have been known to cause death.

The leaves are arranged alternately and are up to 5 inches long. The margins are slightly wavy. The trumpet-shaped flowers bloom from April to October. The blooms are 4-8 inches across. They are white or pale lavender. The petals are fused just like the other nightshade flowers. The seed pods are prickly 1 ½ inch spheres. They have large black seeds.

California native people considered Jimson weed to be the most sacred plant. They used the hallucinogenic qualities to contact the supernatural. It was considered to be a dream-helper used in rites of passage for boys and girls. Roots were crushed and soaked in water to form a tea. Jimson weed was also used to reduce swelling and heal bruising. It was applied to rattlesnake bites as well as for treating asthma. It was used as an anesthetic for setting broken bones. It bears repeating, all parts of the plant are highly poisonous.

This time of the year, Southern California canyons are begging for the first rains. Many of our native plants are in summer dormancy. Jimson weed is still blooming all around us as a true Trail Treasure.



Datura wrightii



Linda Kopatz

I was born July 13, 1932 in London U.K.

I was 7 years old when World War II began, and that changed the everybody's life forever. To avoid the bombing, children were all shipped out of the big cities to foster parents around the countryside. I was sent to live with my grandparents who lived in a small village in the south of England. I completed my entire schooling in a small village school, and like all the other kids during the war, we carried a gas mask to school every day and thought that our war time environment with all the food rationing, etc., was perfectly normal!

I finished my education in a 2-year college in London, training to work as a top-flight secretary. I worked for the American Embassy in downtown London, before migrating to the United States with my first husband in 1953.

In the late 1970's Bill and I were married and in 1994 we moved to California where I put my secretarial skills to work at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in

Pasadena. My favorite job of all time!

Bill retired a few years before I did, and discovered the Placerita Canyon Natural Area. So, when I retired we decided it would be even more fun if I joined the PCNC too, and we could work/play together! I took the annual training course in January 2008, and fell in love with everything the docents and leaders all do to make the place hum

I started out taking the school kids on the various trails during the school year, and also attended most of the monthly training sessions to keep enlarging my skills and knowledge. These days we work on less strenuous tasks, like staffing the beautiful museum and the gift shop. Bill's favorite activity was showing the resident turtles and spiders to the school kids! More recently I have chosen to use my secretarial skills behind the scenes and do the publicity for the Nature Center. What's so great about the PCNA there is something for everyone to do regardless of age, time limitations and skills.

Perhaps my favorite part of the Placerita Canyon Nature Center are the wonderful people I have met and who have become friends over the past 10 years. We all love to eat and there are several fun pot luck events to get everybody together throughout the year. It is also the pleasure we docents all get from serving our community and making a real difference, not only to the school children who come to the park by the bus load to learn about nature but also to the families and many visitors that frequent the park with their kids and pets to experience nature, explore the park, the museum, or just enjoy viewing the animals/birds outside the main building.



Granary Update

by Denny Truger

To make our Tataviam acorn granary more authentic, Robert Grzesiak and I did a little remodel. We put on a deer skin top, and raised the sides. I couldn't find an example of a Tataviam granary so I copied a Yokuts Indian granary because the Tataviam would have had access to similar plant material.

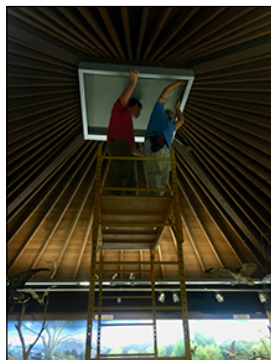
Girl Scouts in Action

by Sue Sutton

Clair Miler and Paige White, Girl Scouts from Troop 8742, visited the Nature Center to learn about our observation bee hive.

Clair and Paige are working on their Silver Award and have chosen "Save the Honey Bees" for their project. They will be sharing what they have learned about the plight of the honey bees with their fellow scouts, and with our Placerita Docents.

They are also concerned about our native bees and have donated six box hives to be placed around Placerita Nature Center.



Blackout Shade

by Denny Truger

For months Ron Kraus suggested that we install a motorized blackout shade in the classroom. Fred Seeley was able to get money for this project from a grant. I arranged the contractor, and last week it got installed. Now we'll be able to enjoy Hoot Gibson Movies and classroom video presentations in crepuscular light! (aka, in a darkened room).





The Placerita Canyon Nature Center
Presents its Annual

Holiday Craft Fair

December 1 and 2, 2018

10:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

at

Placerita Canyon Nature Center

19152 Placerita Canyon Road, Newhall

1 1/2 miles east of the 14 freeway

Create and decorate your own holiday wreaths, centerpieces,
and ornaments using a large assortment of fresh-cut
greenery, pine cones and other beautiful natural treasures.

Please note that this is a fundraising event for the Placerita Canyon Nature Center Associates (a non-profit corporation) and that there is a charge for some activities (cash and checks only, credit and debit cards cannot be accepted.) Make your own Wreath, Yule Log, or other craft as you desire. Children's crafts will also be available. For those with allergy concerns, please note that peanut butter is used on some craft items.

(661) 259-7721 • www.placerita.org





Placerita Canyon Nature Center Associates

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Dear Friend of Placerita Canyon Nature Center,

The Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation and the Placerita Canyon Nature Center Associates are pleased to announce that a new amphitheater has been completed and is now available to the public. It seats approximately 300 guests and is handicap accessible.



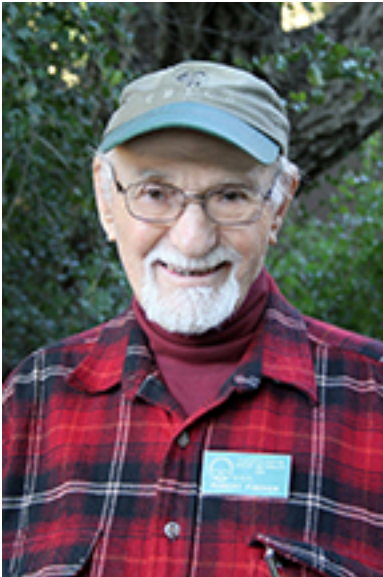
The natural world, local history, and educational themes are encouraged, along with music and the performing arts. Weddings at Placerita Canyon are frequent, and the amphitheater adds another option for the ceremony and festivities.

Reservations and applicable County fees should be handled through Mr. Frank Hoffman, Recreation Services Supervisor, at the Nature Center office. The telephone number is 661-259-7721. His email address is fhoffman@parks.lacounty.gov

The volunteer Docent organization, Placerita Canyon Nature Center Associates (PCNCA), has organized an Amphitheater Program Committee. If you would like to discuss working with us on an amphitheater program, please contact Mr. Jack Levenberg by email at levenber@gmail.com

The PCNCA website is www.placerita.org and the email for information is info@placerita.org





RIP Bob Fischer

I am sorry to let you know that Bob Fischer passed away at the end of August.

Bob was our “Bird Man” at Placerita for many years. He was the one in charge of the bird walks, wrote numerous lively bird articles for the Rattler and was a dedicated docent. He was in the class of 1991, and he was a gentle fountain of information about birds and the flora of the area.

Many docents remember fondly the talks they had with Bob. I used to have lengthy phone calls with him about the excitement

of seeing various birds and making sure the identification was correct.

During these last few years, Bob did not come to Placerita often, but he was very active helping with the music for the theater productions in Friendly Valley where he lived, and where he will be sorely missed. He was a friend to all he touched, and an inspiration for all of us in the Placerita family.

Fly high, Bob.

RIP Millie Bonazzoli

I am very sorry to let you know that Millie Bonazzoli passed away peacefully on Sunday, September 2nd after a short battle with ovarian cancer. Her proudest accomplishment, her son Ciel, was by her side in her final days. I had spoken with her on Friday, as had a few other docents, and she was in great spirits. She was looking forward coming home the following week.

She was supposed to receive her 20-year pin at the ceremony at Eaton Canyon, and Jim Southwell accepted the pin for her and said a few words to honor Millie. They were both from the class of 1998.

We will miss her fun personality and her organization in the kitchen!

RIP Millie.



FALL/WINTER PROGRAMS

FAMILY NATURE WALK

Every Saturday from 11 to noon. An easy 1-hour walk exploring the area’s natural and cultural history.

ANIMAL PRESENTATION

Every Saturday from 1 to 2 pm. See, learn and ask questions about live native animals of the area.

BIRD WALK

Second Saturday of the month from 8 to 10am. For all levels of birders. Bring binoculars, water and field guide.

BIRD WALK, CASTAIC

The Placerita Canyon Natural Area docents lead a monthly bird walk at Castaic Lake Recreation Area on the first Saturday of the month at 8:00AM.

BLOOMS OF THE SEASON

Learn about native plants and what is blooming along the trails. Meet in the patio at 9:30 for a one-hour stroll on the fourth Saturday of every month. Bring your camera and questions. For more information about this free program, call 661.259.7721 or 259.7832.

NATURE EDUCATION

Every 3rd Sunday of the month at 2pm: A free educational program open to the public. Changes may be made, so please call the center at 661.259.7721 to verify. October: Survival Skills by Chris Nygerus (He wrote the book!) November ; Placerita Night Skies by Van Wester, a Mount Wilson Observatory Docent. December : No program, Craft Fair, December 1 and 2. (see flyer).

TWILIGHT HIKES

This program is offered on the 3rd Saturday of each month. This program begins at 6pm and runs for about an hour. Park staff and the Nature Center Docents split groups and courses through the different trails in the dark. Come howl at the moon--if there is one that night!

JUNIOR RANGERS

Second Saturday of each month from 11:30 to 12:30 for children 6 years and above. Nature topics and a small hike, this new program is provided by Ranger Frank Hoffman.

CRAFT FAIR

December 1 and 2 (see flyer)

PLACERITA NATURE TOTS

Age 3-5 and one adult companion for each child. Saturday from 9.30 to 10.30. Registration open the 1st of each month, program limited to 15 children. Register at nature_tots@placerita.org

For more information, please call 661.259.7721 or visit our website at Placerita.org.